

VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHRB #0752/01 2491935
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
R 061935Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0632
INFO RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0510

S E C R E T RABAT 000752

SIPDIS
NOFORN

DEPT FOR INL/AAG AND NEA/MAG
MADRID AND PARIS ALSO FOR DEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/02/2019
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [WADE](#) [KARIM](#) [MO](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: MOROCCAN DRUG INTERDICTION: TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE
STEP BACK

REF: RABAT 0486 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i.,
Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S/NF) Summary: Since at least August 14, when according to Moroccan media police arrested 16 suspected drug barons in a major operation across the country, the press has been reporting regularly on some aspect of the GOM,s efforts to disrupt the drug trade and apprehend those suspected of involvement in it. From reports of confiscation and eradication to implication of current or former high-ranking or elected officials, observers are treated to a steady diet of drug-related fare. To date, between 110 and 140 tons of cannabis has been seized although some has reportedly made its way back to the streets. With the Islamic holy month of Ramadan underway, one Moroccan likened this both to an exercise in "cleansing" and to a soap opera, remarking that every year during Ramadan it seems a scandal of some sort plays out in the papers. Included in this one is the arrest of Senegalese Minister of State Karim Wade, son of Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade. With drugs center-stage this year, the scene is set for off-camera whispering and back-stage political expediency. End summary.

Two Steps Forward

12. (U) Citing a statement from the National Security Service (DGSN), Moroccan media reported that on August 14 police arrested 16 suspected drug barons in a major operation in several cities across the country. Police seized a large quantity of hard drugs, as well as false documents, including identity papers and drivers' licenses. They also impounded vehicles and other equipment. A police source told one Moroccan daily that many of the arrests were made in the northern Tetouan and Nador regions of the country. The source also said the investigation is expected to yield further information about what he called one of the biggest drug busts in Morocco this year.

13. (U) The action comes on the heels of a major operation earlier this year in which Moroccan police arrested more than 100 persons, also in Nador. Those arrests included police officers, gendarmes, sailors and soldiers. A trial date has not been set, as the prosecution continues to develop the case. The Public Prosecutor at the Casablanca Court stated on August 25 that criminal justice applies to all persons shown to be involved in drug trafficking, regardless of their title or position.

And Maybe More

¶4. (U) Perhaps indicative of the assertion that there is no one outside the reach of the law, media on August 31 reported widely on the arrest of former Member of Parliament Mohammed Jouahi, considered by some to be among the biggest and most powerful of the drug barons. Jouahi was, and may still be, a member of the centrist RNI party; some reports note the party leadership was quick to assert that he was no longer a member. Further reports of an ongoing crackdown state that high-profile arrestees have implicated a number of security officers and attorneys in several areas of the country. Journalists have speculated that the current campaign against drug trafficking in the country has come on orders from the highest levels.

But One Step Backward

¶5. (S/NF) If it is the highest levels that are directing the crackdown, they may be directing the outcome of drug interdiction effort as well. It was reported in mid-August that a senior police official at the Casablanca airport was abruptly reassigned to a post with no responsibilities in Layounne, the Western Sahara. The reasons given varied: one paper stated it was because he had stopped a relative of an African leader who was carrying drugs; others claimed it was due to an unspecified series of professional mistakes, perhaps even a sexual scandal. Intelligence reports confirm that it was the former, and that the relative stopped was the son of Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade. The son, Senegalese Minister of State for International Cooperation,

Land Use, Air Transport and Infrastructure Karim Wade, was apparently found in possession of hashish while passing through airport security. King Mohammed VI, with whom Wade is a close friend, reportedly did not appreciate the actions of the local authorities who failed to inform him that Wade had been detained; so he reassigned two officials.

Comment

¶6. (S/NF) While reports of the crackdown on the drug trade in Morocco suggest that authorities continue to focus on the problem, their efforts are not immune to politicization. Given that the younger Wade's arrest could imperil relations between Morocco and Senegal, one can understand the King's pique at the Casablanca airport police. Post reported reftel on the potential impact of drug eradication on voter participation in the June local elections; this latest incident suggests that, despite the king's ongoing calls for judicial reform, apprehension for criminal offense, too, is subject to political expediency. End comment.

Visit Embassy Rabat's Classified Website;
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Moro> cco

Jackson